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Groups of countries in special situations: specific actions related to the particular needs and problems of landlocked developing countries: outcome of the International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation

Letter dated 1 October 2012 from the Permanent Representative of the Lao People's Democratic Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

In my capacity as Chair of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries, I have the honour to transmit to you the text of the ministerial communiqué adopted by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of landlocked developing countries at their eleventh annual meeting, held on 26 September 2012 in the margins of the general debate of the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly, under item 23 (b).

(*Signed*) Saleumxay **Kommasith**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 1 October 2012 from the Permanent Representative of the Lao People's Democratic Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Communiqué of the Eleventh Annual Ministerial Meeting of Landlocked Developing Countries

New York, 26 September 2012

We, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of landlocked developing countries, having met in New York, on 26 September 2012 on the sidelines of the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly of the United Nations,

Recalling the Almaty Declaration[1] and the Almaty Programme of Action: Addressing the Special Needs of Landlocked Developing Countries within a New Global Framework for Transit Transport Cooperation for Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries,[2] adopted in Almaty, Kazakhstan, in 2003,

Recalling also the United Nations Millennium Declaration[3] and the outcome documents of the 2005 World Summit,[4] the 2010 High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals[5] and the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development,[6] held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil,

Recalling further General Assembly resolutions 56/180, 57/242, 58/201, 59/245, 60/208, 61/212, 62/204, 63/228, 64/214, 65/172 and 66/214 related to the particular needs and problems of landlocked developing countries to be addressed by effectively implementing the Almaty Programme of Action,

Recalling the Declaration of the high-level meeting of the sixty-third session of the General Assembly on the midterm review of the Almaty Programme of Action, of 3 October 2008,[7] which stressed that the higher cost of moving goods across borders for landlocked developing countries puts their products at a competitive disadvantage and that landlocked developing countries continue to face challenges in their efforts to establish efficient transit transport systems,

Recalling also the Asunción Platform for the Doha Development Round, adopted at the Meeting of the Ministers of Landlocked Developing Countries Responsible for Trade, held in Asunción on 10 August 2005, the Ulaanbaatar Declaration adopted at the Meeting of the Ministers of Landlocked Developing Countries Responsible for Trade, held in Ulaanbaatar on 28 and 29 August 2007, the Ezulwini Declaration adopted at the Third Meeting of Ministers of Landlocked Developing Countries Responsible for Trade, held in the Kingdom of Swaziland on

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[1] Report of the International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation, Almaty, Kazakhstan, 28 and 29 August 2003 (A/CONF.202/3, annex II).

[2] Ibid., annex I.

[3] See General Assembly resolution 55/2.

[4] See General Assembly resolution 60/1.

[5] See General Assembly resolution 65/1.

[6] See General Assembly resolution 66/288, annex.

[7] See General Assembly resolution 63/2.

21 and 22 October 2009, the Ulaanbaatar Declaration[8] adopted at the High-level Asia-Pacific Policy Dialogue on the Implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action and Other Development Gaps Faced by the Landlocked Developing Countries, held in Ulaanbaatar from 12 to 14 April 2011,

Recalling further the outcome document of the 13th session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD XIII),[9] held in April 2012, and the Ministerial Communiqué of the landlocked developing countries[10] adopted within the framework of UNCTAD XIII, in which States members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) were urged to undertake all endeavours necessary for the advancement and successful conclusion of the Doha Development Round and increase the level of assistance in the context of the Aid for Trade initiative, as well as pay greater attention to the development of productive capacities, the development of infrastructure and the upgrading of information and communication technologies in landlocked developing countries,

Recalling the Almaty Ministerial Declaration[11] adopted at the Fourth Meeting of Ministers of Trade of landlocked developing countries, held in Almaty on 12 September 2012, and the outcome document of the High-level Thematic Meeting on International Trade, Trade Facilitation and Aid for Trade, held in Almaty on 13 and 14 September 2012, which stressed that in order to mitigate the adverse development impact of the geographical situation of landlocked developing countries, comprehensive, coherent and coordinated policies are needed at all levels in the areas of investment, infrastructure (production, transport, telecommunications and energy), logistics (transport and trade facilitation) and technology to support the efforts of landlocked developing countries,

Recognizing that the development challenges faced by our countries owing to the geographical disadvantage of having no territorial access to the sea and the ensuing serious difficulties for the effective integration of our economies into the multilateral trading system permeate every aspect of the development process, including economic growth, poverty reduction and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals,

Recognizing also that the primary responsibility for establishing effective transit systems rests with the landlocked and transit developing countries, which need to seek to create conditions in which resources can be generated, attracted and effectively mobilized to address their development challenges, but that their efforts need to be given continued international support by the development partners and international and regional organizations in a spirit of shared responsibility, including South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation, and taking into account regional integration agreements,

Expressing support for those landlocked developing countries emerging from conflict with a view to enabling them to rehabilitate and reconstruct, as appropriate, political, social and economic infrastructure and to assisting them in achieving their development priorities in accordance with the goals and targets of the Almaty Programme of Action,

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[8] E/ESCAP/67/22, annex.

[9] UNCTAD/ISS/2012/1.

[10] TD/474.

[11] A/67/386, annex.

Acknowledging the invaluable and continued support provided by development partners, including the United Nations system, international and regional organizations, bilateral partners, civil society and the private sector, and the role of South-South cooperation with a view to tackling the critical challenge of addressing the special needs of landlocked developing countries, in particular by developing adequate transport infrastructures and establishing transit transport systems,

Expressing our concern about the re-emergence of rising food and energy prices, compounded by the negative impact of climate change, which have adversely impacted the economic and social progress achieved by the landlocked developing countries in recent years and have increased their vulnerability and weakened their ability to achieve the Millennium Development Goals,

Taking note of the annual progress report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action,

Welcoming General Assembly resolution 66/214, in which the Assembly decided to hold a comprehensive ten-year review conference of the Almaty Programme of Action in 2014, which should be preceded, where necessary, by regional and global as well as thematic preparations,

Adopt the following communiqué:

1. We reaffirm our unwavering commitment to the accelerated implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action through effective and genuine partnerships between landlocked and transit developing countries and their development partners as well as between public and private sectors at the national, bilateral, regional and global levels, as these partnerships are essential for the timely achievement of all the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, and full and meaningful integration of the landlocked developing countries into the global economy;

2. We welcome the progress made by the landlocked developing countries and their transit neighbouring countries and development partners towards implementing the priorities of the Almaty Programme of Action, as evidenced by a number of transport and trade facilitation measures that have reduced border delays and inefficiencies; some expansion in transit transport infrastructure development; increased efforts to harmonize norms and standards in the transport sector; improvements in development assistance allocated to the transport, storage and communications sectors of landlocked developing countries; and some increase in foreign direct investment, remittances and debt relief;

3. We remain concerned, however, that despite the increased efforts in implementing the priorities of the Almaty Programme of Action, landlocked developing countries continue to face high trade transaction costs that put their products at a competitive disadvantage, discourage foreign investment and are the main reason behind their continued marginalization within the global economy. Persistent challenges have prevented landlocked developing countries from fully using trade as an instrument for raising domestic savings required to accelerate economic growth and to sustain progress towards the attainment of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals;

4. We express concern that inadequate transport infrastructure development, including the state of regional trade corridors, the deterioration of existing stocks,

the persistence of key missing links, barriers, the lack of efficient inland transport linkages, such as among road, rail and port facilities, as well as sustainable resources for maintenance remain a major bottleneck to trade expansion for the landlocked developing countries. Transit transport problems persist, such as insufficient carrying capacity at ports, port and customs clearance delays, fees and obstacles owing to cumbersome customs procedures and other regulatory constraints, weak legal and institutional arrangements, and costly bank transactions;

5. We also express concern about the continued lack of export diversification that makes our economies vulnerable to external shocks, and urge the international community to assist the landlocked developing countries to implement policy measures to strengthen and broaden their productive capacities and enhance value addition to their exports in order to be able to reap available trade opportunities;

6. We are deeply concerned that landlocked developing countries continue to be vulnerable to multiple global crises, including the economic and financial crisis, high food prices and commodity price volatility, which affect the livelihoods of our populations and hamper our efforts to sustain economic growth. We therefore reaffirm our commitment to deploy all efforts to strengthen our resilience to the impact of external shocks and enhance further implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action and the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals;

7. In this regard, we urge the international community, development partners and multilateral development institutions, including United Nations institutions, to scale up support to landlocked developing countries through increased financial and technical support to enable them to cope with multiple external shocks and to mitigate the impact of new and emerging challenges on the most vulnerable segments of their populations;

8. We also call upon international organizations and other research institutions to undertake research on the vulnerability of landlocked developing countries to external shocks and develop a set of vulnerability indicators that can be used for early warning purposes;

9. We recognize that climate change poses a potentially permanent and serious threat to the economic and social development of our countries and can undermine our efforts towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, since we are the least prepared to confront the challenges of adapting to climate change and mitigating its effects that would even further aggravate the disadvantages that our countries are facing. We are vulnerable to climate change impacts on agriculture production, frequent occurrence of natural disasters, land degradation and desertification. Other issues that affect landlocked developing countries include food security, viability of inland fisheries, water availability, erosion of biodiversity and human health. We urge our development partners to provide financial, technological and capacity-building assistance to enable landlocked developing countries to address climate change challenges, in particular by putting in place on a priority basis effective adaptation strategies and appropriate mitigation actions, and to provide a special climate change financing facility for landlocked developing countries;

10. We encourage relevant international organizations, including the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked

Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the World Bank, the United Nations Environment Programme, and the United Nations regional commissions to assist the landlocked developing countries to conduct studies to better understand the implications of climate change on landlocked developing countries and to develop measures to counter its adverse effects;

11. We underscore the importance of trade facilitation measures for the growth and expansion of the external trade of landlocked developing countries and its positive impact on their economic development. We call upon the international community to ensure that the agreement on trade facilitation in the final outcome of the Doha Development Round contains binding commitments ensuring freedom of transit, strict limits on fees, charges and formalities, transparency and common standards for documentation requirements, therefore allowing for expeditious movement, release and clearance of goods. The special needs of the landlocked developing countries must be taken fully into account to assist them to overcome their geographical disadvantages. The ultimate objective must be the lowering of transaction costs by reducing transport time and enhancing certainty in transborder trade;

12. We call for a development-friendly solution to the current impasse in the Doha Round of trade negotiations that could open the way for a successful and ambitious conclusion of the 10-year round. This should increase market access, generate increased trade flows and focus on the needs of the landlocked developing countries. Emphasis should remain on the commitment to make operationally effective the principle of special and differential treatment for developing countries; to the parallel elimination of all forms of export subsidies; and to substantial reductions in trade-distorting domestic support, in accordance with the mandate of the Doha Round. The final outcome should also adequately address the issue of technical assistance and capacity-building;

13. We also call upon relevant United Nations and other international organizations to provide greater support to strengthen the negotiating capacities of landlocked developing countries and their ability to implement trade facilitation measures;

14. We call for the provision of enhanced technical assistance to those landlocked developing countries that are still outside the rules-based multilateral trading system and wish to accede to WTO. We stress the need to take into account the individual levels of development and the special needs and problems caused by the geographical disadvantage of being landlocked during the accession process and to ensure that all provisions on special and differential treatment reflected in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and in all WTO agreements are granted to all acceding landlocked developing countries. Targeted technical assistance should be provided to acceding landlocked developing countries during all stages of the process;

15. We reiterate our request that development assistance provided in the context of the Aid for Trade initiative should give adequate consideration to the special needs and requirements of landlocked developing countries. Areas of targeted support should include capacity-building for the formulation of trade policies, participation in trade negotiations, implementation of trade facilitation measures, implementation of international agreements, investment in infrastructure

for transport, upgrading of information and communication technologies and utilities and strengthening of productive capacities with a view to increasing the competitiveness of our countries' products in export markets. We attach great importance to the Aid for Trade initiative and are committed to enhancing our participation in the monitoring process to better articulate our trade needs and priorities for support;

16. We underscore the prominent role that foreign direct investment (FDI) plays in accelerating development and poverty eradication through employment, transfer of managerial and technological know-how and non-debt-creating flows of capital, as well as its key role in providing infrastructure for transport, telecommunications and utilities. We call on capital-exporting countries to provide greater financial assistance and support to FDI-seeking efforts of landlocked developing countries by adopting and implementing economic, financial and legal incentives to encourage FDI flows to landlocked developing countries;

17. We call upon our bilateral and multilateral development partners not only to maintain current levels of official development assistance to landlocked developing countries, but to further raise commitments in order to support transit transport infrastructure development and trade facilitation projects in landlocked and transit developing countries, therefore enhancing intraregional connectivity, completing missing links and ensuring the proper functioning of strategic sea corridors;

18. We call for donor support through greater debt relief to help landlocked developing countries make progress towards the realization of the Almaty Programme objectives and achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals;

19. We commend the efforts made through South-South cooperation in the areas of transit transport cooperation between landlocked and transit developing countries and request a scaling-up of the efforts that can help the landlocked developing countries to address the complex and severe development challenges that they face owing to their geographical disadvantages, thereby leading to the acceleration of the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action;

20. We are committed to the realization of the mandate of the international think tank for the landlocked developing countries and call upon all landlocked developing countries to become party to its multilateral agreement. We commend countries that have deposited instruments of accession to the agreement and urge those remaining to accelerate the processes leading to ratification and accession, with a view to advancing the full operationalization of the think tank as soon as possible. We also commend the steps taken by the Government of Mongolia to advance the operationalization of the international think tank for the landlocked developing countries in Ulaanbaatar. We call upon international organizations, in particular the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNCTAD and the regional commissions, donor countries and other leading centres of excellence to support the operational activities of the think tank;

21. We note that the 2003 Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Road Network which came into force in 2005, and the 2006 Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway Network, which entered into force in June 2009, have helped to promote investment in the development, maintenance and upgrading of the Asian Highway priority routes and of the

Trans-Asian Railway Network, which has greatly benefited the region. We therefore call upon international organizations and donor countries to support the effective implementation of the projects identified under the Intergovernmental Agreements;

22. We take note of efforts being deployed by African landlocked developing countries to address the legal bottlenecks experienced by Africa's transit transport system owing to the lack of integrated and standardized road infrastructure. In this context, we support the work undertaken by the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States in consultation with the Economic Commission for Africa, the African Union Commission, the World Bank and the African Development Bank. We request the Office of the High Representative to further its efforts in the promotion of an African transport infrastructure intergovernmental agreement, particularly for the Trans-African Highway;

23. We encourage our development partners, including donors and the international financial and development institutions, as well as private entities, to make voluntary contributions to the Trust Fund established by the Secretary-General to support the activities relating to the follow-up of the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action;

24. We request the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States to continue to mobilize and coordinate international support and resources for the effective implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action and the Declaration on the midterm review, in accordance with its mandate;

25. We reaffirm the decision of the General Assembly, in its resolution 66/214 of 22 December 2011, to hold a comprehensive 10-year review conference on the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action in 2014, which should be preceded by regional and global as well as thematic preparations in a most effective, well-structured and broad participatory manner. Two meetings of the intergovernmental preparatory committee should be convened in early 2014;

26. We stress that the comprehensive review represents an important opportunity for landlocked and transit developing countries and our development partners to critically assess the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action, in particular its best practices and weaknesses;

27. We also stress that the comprehensive 10-year review conference should come up with a development agenda that enables the landlocked developing countries to integrate into the global trading system and move closer to achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, in the next decade. The new framework should also provide for effective arrangements for follow-up, review and monitoring of its implementation;

28. We call upon all landlocked developing countries to engage fully in the preparation process for the 10-year review of the Almaty Programme of Action and to participate in the conference itself at the highest level possible;

29. We also call upon the international community to give particular importance to the preparatory process and to ensure its active participation in the conference;

30. We request the organizations of the United Nations system, in particular UNCTAD, the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, UNDP, the United Nations regional economic commissions, other international organizations, especially the World Bank, WTO, the Common Fund for Commodities, the International Road Transport Union and the World Customs Organization, regional banks, regional organizations, regional economic communities, parliaments, the private sector and other stakeholders to support the preparatory process for the 10-year review of the Almaty Programme of Action and the conference itself;

31. We also request the Secretary-General of the United Nations to undertake all necessary measures to provide the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States with the necessary resources to enable it to carry out its tasks relating to the preparations for the comprehensive review of the Almaty Programme of Action and other related mandates given by the General Assembly.